



# Family Frenzies

By Penny Woods

## A Hot Dog Means Cold Cash

It is not a good sign if your husband heads out of town with the parting words, "By the way, the dog upchucked in the yard."

Expect the oven to catch fire by mid-morning while an adult son burns breakfast fries along with a wooden server. By afternoon, expect the dog to act strangely. Boomer staggers about the yard like a drunken sailor and one eve dances a wild jig. Has he been poisoned by insect spray? Is he having a heat stroke?

I race outside as Boomer's legs slip and slide on the patio and he crashes into a patio post on his way to greet me, and I wonder if he is blind too. "Help!" I yell to a son. Teamwork is essential in times of crisis. It allows you to blame someone else.

"Can't go to the game!" my son shouts on the phone to friends. "Our dog is dying!"

I call the vet. They cannot locate a doctor this Saturday but suggest another animal hospital a couple of freeways over.

Why not? The dog is leashed,

but can only totter in tight right circles. It takes us both to herd him into the back seat of the car. Eventually we are on our careening way while the dog with out-of-control muscles keeps trying to trash his way into the driver's seat.

Twenty minutes later as we fly off the freeway on a curve, Boomer slams onto the car floor into a paws-up position.

We screech to an abrupt stop in a seedy part of town and open both doors for a fast exit. "Watch my purse," I yell to my son, leaving it on the car seat. I run up to the hospital door and knock loudly. No answer. I sprint around the building one way and meet my son coming the other. We end up panting at the front door again and finally spot the tiniest sign ever written, "Ring Bell." I ring and ring and ring. People appear from inside the building. They help carry our jerking dog inside and disappear with him behind flapping doors. "Where's my purse?" I ask my son. He shrugs.

I approach the reception desk and notice the counter girl's

short spiked hair, dyed a blood red. Her ears have multiple holes—seven piercings in one ear and two in another. Her fingers are decorated with rings resembling brass knuckles. I wonder if hospital technique relies heavily on voodoo and stone age practices.

Two days and nights—plus a cool \$500 later—our dog is released. His forepaw is shaved where the IV was attached. I am handed two types of pills to complete his recovery from an attack of vestibular disease: an inner ear problem of unknown origin.

Our first dog would not take pills even if I pushed the pill back on his tongue, clamped his mouth shut and tickled his throat to encourage a swallow. Experience makes me smarter. Now I pop Boomer's pills into sections of hotdog and he gulps them down.

My husband returns from his trip. "What's for dinner?" he asks.

"How about a hot dog?" I answer, "And some crispy fries?"

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## Don't Count Your Omelettes Before They Land

Occasionally the average American family eats out together but forgets to use that inborn reflex action handed down to us by the Old West, where words were kept at a minimum and actions did the talking. Observe your family at a favorite omelette brunch.

The brunch is set up so that anyone can tag along. You simply walk over to the fruit and omelette table where Mr. Chef, reminiscent of yester-

year's two-handed gun slinger, is working from the hip with either hand as he flips omelettes into the air.

I hold eggs in the highest regard, considering where they come from. The hard-working hen delivers from one end, then gets it on the other end before Sunday dinner down on the farm.

I spent my 10th summer on a farm and was fascinated by Saturday chicken chopping.

One of Mrs. White's boys would catch a plump hen and clutch it upside down by the legs while it squawked like crazy to be released. Mrs. White would then take her hatchet with one hand, pin the hen's neck against a stump, then chop its head off with one sharp blow. Immediately, the headless hen raced off, zig-zagging in a quiet flurry of flapping feathers and dripping blood. It took several turns

around the barnyard before it dropped like a gun-riddled outlaw. Mrs. White would proceed to pluck out the feathers and cook it for Sunday dinner. I always pretended that I wasn't eating the hen I saw get the ax, but eggs would have certainly tasted better.

And there are no better eggs than those in Mr. Chef's omelettes. His question to you will be:

"What do you want on your omelette?"

The choices are onions, olives, green pepper, tomatoes, bacon, mushrooms, and chilies. You may answer with a mouthful of fruit as you

point to various bowls, "yuns, blolvs, lepfer, matoes, bak in, and slittle of the mooshrms."

Meanwhile, Mr. Chef, who is skimpy with words but big on actions, wonders why you just didn't say "everything but the chilies."

As Mr. Chef begins cooking your personalized omelette, you may fill your plate with potatoes and rolls, but be sure to leave a big space for Mr. Chef's masterpiece. Keep one eye on him as he works, because when he flips your omelette and it sails high into the air, he will ask:

"Cheese?"

Have your answer ready right away, as in "Nah," or

"Make my day." Within this micro-second, use your resourceful reflex inherited from the frontier days. Shoot your plate in, straight from the hip, and *snag your omelette as it is coming down.*

Now you know why quite a few land on the floor. And Mr. Chef is either forced to go through the whole cooking procedure again or rename his creation "Scramble Snafu." Keep this program in mind the next time your family attends an omelette brunch. Mr. Chef hopes you will be eating an omelette that doesn't drop like a you-know-what.

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## Parental Breathing

When my first son was 7, he threatened to leave home if we refused to comply to his wishes. I gasped a little breath and worried. True to his word, he went out on his own and climbed up a tree in the front yard. There he swayed in the highest branches for most of the day so that all the neighbors could plainly see what cruel parents he had. A hungry stomach eventually brought him back to earth. It shook up his parents somewhat to know this kid meant business.

Years passed and the time came when parents and children alike were ready for a mass exodus. Both sons happily left for college. The parents congratulated themselves on Good Parenting and danced a little jig. They assumed the college years would be naturally followed by marriage and careers.

NXWAKZZZ! goes the buzzer. Wrong.

The sons eventually returned home to live and pursue more degrees. This major re-

adjustment time challenged the now four adults, all with minds of their own and wardrobes to match.

Today the umbilical cord is ever expanding, extending, and stretching to the max. But once in a while a sliver of daylight glimmers at its end.

"I might get married," said one son.

I held my breath momentarily. My husband burst into a chorus of "Hallelujahs," grabbed me by the waist and we danced for joy in the kitchen.

Recently one son landed a job which included a nice little parsonage. "Hosannas" rang out. You have never seen such fancy footwork on the kitchen floor from a pre-bankrupt couple.

Three weeks later, the front door opened in the wee hours of darkness.

"Thirteen gunshots in one night is enough for me," we heard as a son returned home to spend the night.

I involuntarily gasped as we learned that the site of gang

wars is parsonage turf, especially on Friday and Saturday nights. This put a damper on the son spending his nights there since the loudest nocturnal noises he ever heard at home were burping crickets.

A few weeks later the son gathered up his courage and left again for another try in the parsonage. At church on Sunday we asked how it went.

"Around midnight there were bright lights outside," he said. "So I looked out my window and saw six squad cars. They were lining up people and cuffing them and one officer rolled out a wheelbarrow of guns."

Great, we thought.

"Don't worry about me," he said. "I won't have to hit the floor when I hear gunfire. I'm already there since I moved my mattress down."

He has gone out on his own. This kid means business. This time I'm not holding my breath. If he can stay until Christmas, well buy him a microwave.

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